

Valley. A task force was formed to study the issue. The result of that meeting was the founding of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV). The first coalition of its kind in the United States, the PCADV is still a leader in victims' rights issues in the State and the Nation.

In 1977, the Womencenter received a grant to develop a full-time domestic violence program. Services expanded and a liaison with Legal Services of Northeastern Pennsylvania was established.

A speakers' bureau was begun to promote community awareness. In 1978, the task force established the first shelter for battered women in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Within one week, the unadvertised shelter was completely filled to capacity. That June, the Womencenter incorporated as the Domestic Violence Service Center. A board was formed and the first officers were elected.

The number of clients served by the DVSC has grown from approximately 700 in the 1985-86 fiscal year to more than 2,400 per year at present. The Domestic Violence Service Center has served the area as a shelter, an advocacy agency, an outreach center, and a counseling center.

The DVSC has been on the forefront of public education of domestic violence and involved with other social service agencies and the District Attorney's office in creating a county-wide protocol for the handling of domestic violence cases. The center has coordinated with local police forces to create a common protocol in handling the actual distress calls and has coordinated with local health care providers to develop a family violence medical protocol that has been adopted by all hospitals in the county as well as by numerous home health care professionals and physicians' offices. Most recently, in July 2001, the center received funding to support its partnership with Northeast Counseling Services to implement a Mental Health Advocacy Project, a first of its kind in the state. The project will cross-train mental health and domestic violence staff and provide informed services to clients of both agencies.

Led by President Mary Ellen Roberts and Executive Director Ellen Moyle Harris, the DVSC serves as an example to the entire State of Pennsylvania. The center also plays a leadership role statewide through representation on PCADV committees including ones that handle legal advocacy, contracts, legislative and planning matters. In addition, Pat Kwetkauskie, a DVSC representative, chairs the Pennsylvania Medical Advocacy Task Force and has also chaired a committee of the former Attorney General's Domestic Violence Task Force. DVSC staff and training team volunteers have also presented workshops and lectures at state, regional and national conferences. At a statewide PCADV conference in 1991, 12 members of the DVSC board, staff and advisory committee were honored with Leadership in Action awards.

The DVSCs Court Advocacy, Medical Advocacy, STOP Violence Against Women Projects continue to be integral parts of DVSC services, and the center continues to provide technical assistance to agencies in other counties that are interested in duplicating DVSC programs.

Most importantly, the Domestic Violence Service Center has provided shelter for thousands of battered women who flee their homes, often in the middle of the night, afraid for their lives and the lives of their children.

Mr. Speaker, the impact of domestic violence affects the entire community. Each year, the center conducts a solemn and poignant candlelight vigil at the Luzerne County Courthouse to commemorate Domestic Violence Month. I have had the honor of participating in this event. I am proud to commend the hard-working staff, board of directors, and volunteers on their dedicated effort to help those who would otherwise be trapped indefinitely in a crisis situation. Through their work and dedication, they offer a place for women and children to turn to break the cycle of violence. Although this anniversary is not a celebration, it is a call to each of us to help stop this devastation of the American family. Mr. Speaker, I hope this anniversary will expand public awareness of the important work that the DVSC does.

SUPPORT FOR H.R. 3253, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS CENTERS

HON. LANE EVANS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 13, 2001

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, as an original co-sponsor of H.R. 3253, the National Medical Emergency Preparedness Act of 2001, I strongly support this important legislation which will improve our national ability to respond to acts of terrorism and other medical emergencies. I look forward to quick action on this legislation and commend my friend and colleague, Chris Smith, for authoring this measure.

The National Medical Emergency Preparedness Act of 2001 would create National Medical Preparedness Centers within the Department of Veterans Affairs. These centers would have several important missions. In addition to training medical personnel to recognize the symptoms of exposure to chemical, biological and radiological weapons, the National Medical Preparedness Centers will provide important national leadership in the development of new diagnostic tests, vaccines, and treatments for chemical, biological and radiological terrorist threats.

Last month, on October 15, the Committee on Veterans Affairs received testimony on VA contingency missions to the Department of Defense in times of war or national emergency and as a participant in the Federal Response Plan during disasters. Federal agencies described a critical role for the Department and expounded upon additional roles, given the resources, the Department could play.

In response to that hearing, H.R. 3253 was introduced. The National Medical Emergency Preparedness Centers established by this legislation will provide important contributions to innovation and leadership in the detection of biological, chemical, and radiological hazards, the development of vaccines to prevent dev-

astating consequences we have seen from exposures to toxins such as anthrax and effective treatment for exposures to pathogenic materials.

VA has many successful models of Centers that combine research, education and training, and patient treatment. Among such "centers of excellence" are its Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Centers, its Mental Illness Research Education and Clinical Centers, its Parkinson's Disease Research Education and Clinical Centers and other centers selected on a competitive basis in order to create living laboratories for applying state-of-the-art care to patients that need it. The synergies of these centers' missions combine to produce innovative research and technologies to their respective fields.

VA has much to offer the Nation in establishing Centers that can build upon its existing expertise, but break new ground in further exploring areas that directly affect the lives of all Americans. I believe the benefits to our public health would far outweigh the \$20 million annual cost to fund these Centers. As we continue our quest to protect our homeland, we must find leaders within the community to assist our efforts to protect Americans. VA can and should be part of this leadership team.

RECOGNIZING EL PASO COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENT, DR. RAMON DOMINGUEZ

HON. SILVESTRE REYES

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 13, 2001

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an individual who has done an exceptional job at the El Paso Community College (EPCC). Dr. Ramon Dominguez is retiring from EPCC after 28 years of public service to this institution, the 4th largest community college in the state of Texas. Dr. Dominguez has done an outstanding job in overseeing the day-to-day operations of the college's five branches and an operating budget of about \$77 million. He has provided leadership and direction to the 2,800 employees and about 24,000 students, 82 percent of whom are Hispanic.

Dr. Dominguez is easy going and has a soothing nature about him. He received overwhelming support from the faculty, staff, and students when he became the President of the Community College in May of 2000. Shortly after being sworn in as President, Dr. Dominguez began reorganizing EPCC's top administration. He demonstrated his beliefs in being highly inclusive and sharing the governing of EPCC. He also showed that he is approachable, fair, willing to listen, hard-working and committed to the students and the college.

Dr. Dominguez graduated from the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) in 1971 with a secondary education degree. As soon as he completed college, Dr. Dominguez began his focus on serving people. He has always held the goals of teaching, counseling, and mentoring as his top priorities and has contributed greatly to the success of others, especially the students.